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# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL OF ART,

OCTOBER 29TH, 1858,

BY JOHN RUSKIN, LL.D.,

HONORARY STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND SLADE PROFESSOR OF FINE ART.

*NEW EDITION.*

GEORGE ALLEN,  
SUNNYSIDE, ORPINGTON, KENT.

1879.



16/-



Phil. C. Rother

1897.



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I SUPPOSE the persons interested in establishing a School of Art for workmen may in the main be divided into two classes, namely, first, those who chiefly desire to make the men themselves happier, wiser, and better; and secondly, those who desire to enable them to produce better and more valuable work. These two objects may, of course, be kept both in view at the same time; nevertheless, there is a wide difference in the spirit with which we shall approach our task, according to the motive of these two which weighs most with us—a difference great enough to divide, as I have said, the promoters of any such scheme into two distinct classes; one philanthropic in the gist of its aim, and the other commercial in the gist of its aim; one desiring the workman to be better informed chiefly for his own sake, and the other chiefly that he may be enabled to produce for us commodities precious in themselves, and which shall successfully compete with those of other countries.

And this separation in motives must lead also to a distinction in the machinery of the work. The philanthropists address them-

Gen. Hist. Eng. Lab.

selves, not to the artisan merely, but to the labourer in general, desiring in any possible way to refine the habits or increase the happiness of our whole working population, by giving them new recreations or new thoughts: and the principles of Art-education adopted in a school which has this wide but somewhat indeterminate aim, are, or should be, very different from those adopted in a school meant for the special instruction of the artisan in his own business. I do not think this distinction is yet firmly enough fixed in our minds, or calculated upon in our plans of operation. We have hitherto acted, it seems to me, under a vague impression that the arts of drawing and painting might be, up to a certain point, taught in a general way to every one, and would do every one equal good; and that each class of operatives might afterwards bring this general knowledge into use in their own trade, according to its requirements. Now, that is not so. A wood-carver needs for his business to learn drawing in quite a different way from a china-painter, and a jeweller from a worker in iron. They must be led to study quite different characters in the natural forms they introduce in their various manufacture. It is of no use to teach an iron-worker to observe the down on a peach, and of none to teach laws of atmospheric effect to a carver in wood. So far as their business is concerned, their brains would be vainly occupied by such things, and they would be prevented from pursuing, with enough distinctness or intensity, the qualities of Art which can alone be expressed in the materials with which they each have to do.

Now, I believe it to be wholly impossible to teach special application of Art principles to various trades in a single school. That special application can be only learned rightly by the experience

of years in the particular work required. The power of each material, and the difficulties connected with its treatment, are not so much to be taught as to be felt; it is only by repeated touch and continued trial beside the forge or the furnace, that the goldsmith can find out how to govern his gold, or the glass-worker his crystal; and it is only by watching and assisting the actual practice of a master in the business, that the apprentice can learn the efficient secrets of manipulation, or perceive the true limits of the involved conditions of design. It seems to me, therefore, that all idea of reference to definite businesses should be abandoned in such schools as that just established: we can have neither the materials, the conveniences, nor the empirical skill in the master, necessary to make such teaching useful. All specific Art-teaching must be given in schools established by each trade for itself: and when our operatives are a little more enlightened on these matters, there will be found, as I have already stated in my lectures on the political economy of Art, absolute necessity for the establishment of guilds of trades in an active and practical form, for the purposes of ascertaining the principles of Art proper to their business, and instructing their apprentices in them, as well as making experiments on materials, and on newly-invented methods of procedure; besides many other functions which I cannot now enter into account of. All this for the present, and in a school such as this, I repeat, we cannot hope for: we shall obtain no satisfactory result, unless we give up such hope, and set ourselves to teaching the operative, however employed—be he farmer's labourer, or manufacturer's; be he mechanic, artificer, shopman, sailor, or ploughman—teaching, I say, as far as we can, one and the same thing to all; namely, Sight.

Not a slight thing to teach, this : perhaps, on the whole, the most important thing to be taught in the whole range of teaching. To be taught to read—what is the use of that, if you know not whether what you read is false or true? To be taught to write or to speak—but what is the use of speaking, if you have nothing to say? To be taught to think—nay, what is the use of being able to think, if you have nothing to think of? But to be taught to see is to gain word and thought at once, and both true. There is a vague acknowledgment of this in the way people are continually expressing their longing for light, until all the common language of our prayers and hymns has sunk into little more than one monotonous metaphor, dimly twisted into alternate languages,—asking first in Latin to be illuminated ; and then in English to be enlightened ; and then in Latin again to be delivered out of obscurity ; and then in English to be delivered out of darkness ; and then for beams, and rays, and suns, and stars, and lamps, until sometimes one wishes that, at least for religious purposes, there were no such words as light or darkness in existence. Still, the main instinct which makes people endure this perpetuity of repetition is a true one ; only the main thing they want and ought to ask for is, not light, but Sight. It doesn't matter how much light you have if you don't know how to use it. It may very possibly put out your eyes, instead of helping them. Besides, we want, in this world of ours, very often to be able to see in the dark—that's the great gift of all ;—but at any rate to see ; no matter by what light, so only we can see things as they are. On my word, we should soon make it a different world, if we could get but a little—ever so little—of the dervish's ointment in the Arabian Nights, not to show us the treasures of the earth, but the facts of it.

However, whether these things be generally true or not, at all events it is certain that our immediate business, in such a school as this, will prosper more by attending to eyes than to hands ; we shall always do most good by simply endeavouring to enable the student to see natural objects clearly and truly. We ought not even to try too strenuously to give him the power of representing them. That power may be acquired, more or less, by exercises which are no wise conducive to accuracy of sight : and, *vice versâ*, accuracy of sight may be gained by exercises which in no wise conduce to ease of representation. For instance, it very much assists the power of drawing to spend many hours in the practice of washing in flat tints ; but all this manual practice does not in the least increase the student's power of determining what the tint of a given object actually is. He would be more advanced in the knowledge of the facts by a single hour of well-directed and well-*corrected* effort, rubbing out and putting in again, lightening, and darkening, and scratching, and blotching, in patient endeavours to obtain concordance with fact, issuing perhaps, after all, in total destruction or unrepresentability of the drawing ; but also in acute perception of the things he has been attempting to copy in it. Of course, there is always a vast temptation, felt both by the master and student, to struggle towards visible results, and obtain something beautiful, creditable, or saleable, in way of actual drawing : but the more I see of schools, the more reason I see to look with doubt upon those which produce too many showy and complete works by the pupils. A showy work will always be found, on stern examination of it, to have been done by some conventional rule ;—some servile compliance with directions which the student does not see the reason for ; and representation of truths

which he has not himself perceived : the execution of such drawings will be found monotonous and lifeless ; their light and shade specious and formal, but false. A drawing which the pupil has learned much in doing, is nearly always full of blunders and mishaps, and it is highly necessary for the formation of a truly public or universal school of Art, that the masters should not try to conceal or anticipate such blunders, but only seek to employ the pupil's time so as to get the most precious results for his understanding and his heart, not for his hand.

For, observe, the best that you can do in the production of drawing, or of draughtsmanship, must always be nothing in itself, unless the whole life be given to it. An amateur's drawing, or a workman's drawing—anybody's drawing but an artist's, is always valueless in itself. It may be, as you have just heard Mr. Redgrave tell you, most precious as a memorial, or as a gift, or as a means of noting useful facts ; but as *Art*, an amateur's drawing is always wholly worthless ; and it ought to be one of our great objects to make the pupil understand and feel that, and prevent his trying to make his valueless work look, in some superficial, hypocritical, eye-catching, penny-catching way, like work that is really good.

If, therefore, we have to do with pupils belonging to the higher ranks of life, our main duty will be to make them good judges of Art, rather than artists ; for though I had a month to speak to you, instead of an hour, time would fail me if I tried to trace the various ways in which we suffer, nationally, for want of powers of enlightened judgment of Art in our upper and middle classes. Not that this judgment can ever be obtained without discipline of the hand : no man ever was a thorough judge of painting who



could not draw ; but the drawing should only be thought of as a means of fixing his attention upon the subtleties of the Art put before him, or of enabling him to record such natural facts as are necessary for comparison with it. I should also attach the greatest importance to severe limitation of choice in the examples submitted to him. To study one good master till you understand him will teach you more than a superficial acquaintance with a thousand : power of criticism does not consist in knowing the names or the manner of many painters, but in discerning the excellence of a few.

If, on the contrary, our teaching is addressed more definitely to the operative, we need not endeavour to render his powers of criticism very acute. About many forms of existing Art, the less he knows the better. His sensibilities are to be cultivated with respect to nature chiefly ; and his imagination, if possible, to be developed, even though somewhat to the disadvantage of his judgment. It is better that his work should be bold, than faultless : and better that it should be delightful, than discreet.

And this leads me to the second, or commercial, question ; namely, how to get from the workman, after we have trained him, the best and most precious work, so as to enable ourselves to compete with foreign countries, or develop new branches of commerce in our own.

Many of us, perhaps, are under the impression that plenty of schooling will do this ; that plenty of lecturing will do it ; that sending abroad for patterns will do it ; or that patience, time, and money, and goodwill may do it. And, alas, none of these things, nor all of them put together, will do it. If you want really good work, such as will be acknowledged by all the world, there is but

one way of getting it, and that is a difficult one. You may offer any premium you choose for it—but you will find it can't be done for premiums. You may send for patterns to the antipodes—but you will find it can't be done upon patterns. You may lecture on the principles of Art to every school in the kingdom—and you will find it can't be done upon principles. You may wait patiently for the progress of the age—and you will find your Art is unprogressive. Or you may set yourselves impatiently to urge it by the inventions of the age—and you will find your chariot of Art entirely immovable either by screw or paddle. There's no way of getting good Art, I repeat, but one—at once the simplest and most difficult—namely, to enjoy it. Examine the history of nations, and you will find this great fact clear and unmistakable on the front of it—that good Art has only been produced by nations who rejoiced in it; fed themselves with it, as if it were bread; basked in it, as if it were sunshine; shouted at the sight of it; danced with the delight of it; quarrelled for it; fought for it; starved for it; did, in fact, precisely the opposite with it of what we want to do with it—they made it to keep, and we to sell.

And truly this is a serious difficulty for us as a commercial nation. The very primary motive with which we set about the business, makes the business impossible. The first and absolute condition of the thing's ever becoming saleable is, that we shall make it without wanting to sell it; nay, rather with a determination not to sell it at any price, if once we get hold of it. Try to make your Art popular, cheap—a fair article for your foreign market; and the foreign market will always show something better. But make it only to please yourselves, and even be resolved that you won't let anybody else have any; and forthwith you will find



everybody else wants it. And observe, the insuperable difficulty is this making it to please ourselves, while we are incapable of pleasure. Take, for instance, the simplest example, which we can all understand, in the art of dress. We have made a great fuss about the patterns of silk lately; wanting to vie with Lyons, and make a Paris of London. Well, we may try for ever: so long as we don't really enjoy silk patterns, we shall never get any. And we don't enjoy them. Of course, all ladies like their dresses to sit well, and be becoming; but of real enjoyment of the beauty of the silk, for the silk's own sake, I find none; for the test of that enjoyment is, that they would like it also to sit well, and look well, on somebody else. The pleasure of being well dressed, or even of seeing well-dressed people—for I will suppose in my fair hearers that degree of unselfishness—be that pleasure great or small, is quite a different thing from delight in the beauty and play of the silken folds and colours themselves, for their own gorgeousness or grace.

I have just had a remarkable proof of the total want of this feeling in the modern mind. I was staying part of this summer in Turin, for the purpose of studying one of the Paul Veroneses there—the presentation of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. Well, one of the most notable characters in this picture is the splendour of its silken dresses: and, in particular, there was a piece of white brocade, with designs upon it in gold, which it was one of my chief objects in stopping at Turin to copy. You may, perhaps, be surprised at this; but I must just note in passing, that I share this weakness of enjoying dress patterns with all good students and all good painters. It doesn't matter what school they belong to—Fra Angelico, Perugino, John Bellini, Giorgione, Titian,

Tintoret, Veronese, Leonardo da Vinci—no matter how they differ in other respects, all of them like dress patterns ; and what is more, the nobler the painter is, the surer he is to do his patterns well.

I stayed then, as I say, to make a study of this white brocade. It generally happens in public galleries that the best pictures are the worst placed : and this Veronese is not only hung at considerable height above the eye, but over a door, through which, however, as all the visitors to the gallery must pass, they cannot easily overlook the picture, though they would find great difficulty in examining it. Beside this door, I had a stage erected for my work, which being of some height and rather in a corner, enabled me to observe, without being observed myself, the impression made by the picture on the various visitors. It seemed to me that if ever a work of Art caught popular attention, this ought to do so. It was of very large size ; of brilliant colour, and of agreeable subject. There are about twenty figures in it, the principal ones being life size : that of Solomon, though in the shade, is by far the most perfect conception of the young king in his pride of wisdom and beauty which I know in the range of Italian art ; the queen is one of the loveliest of Veronese's female figures ; all the accessories are full of grace and imagination ; and the finish of the whole so perfect that one day I was upwards of two hours vainly trying to render, with perfect accuracy, the curves of two leaves of the brocaded silk. The English travellers used to walk through the room in considerable numbers ; and were invariably directed to the picture by their laquais de place, if they missed seeing it themselves. And to this painting—in which it took me six weeks to examine rightly two figures—I found that on an average, the English traveller who was doing Italy conscientiously, and seeing

everything as he thought he ought, gave about half or three quarters of a minute; but the flying or fashionable traveller, who came to do as much as he could in a given time, never gave more than a single glance, most of such people turning aside instantly to a bad landscape hung on the right, containing a vigorously painted white wall, and an opaque green moat. What especially impressed me, however, was that none of the ladies ever stopped to look at the dresses in the Veronese. Certainly they were far more beautiful than any in the shops in the great square, yet no one ever noticed them. Sometimes when any nice, sharp-looking, bright-eyed girl came into the room, I used to watch her all the way, thinking—"Come, at least *you'll* see what the Queen of Sheba has got on." But no—on she would come carelessly, with a little toss of the head, apparently signifying "nothing in *this* room worth looking at—except myself," and so trip through the door, and away.

The fact is, we don't care for pictures: in very deed we don't. The Academy exhibition is a thing to talk of and to amuse vacant hours; those who are rich amongst us buy a painting or two, for mixed reasons, sometimes to fill the corner of a passage—sometimes to help the drawing-room talk before dinner—sometimes because the painter is fashionable—occasionally because he is poor—not unfrequently that we may have a collection of specimens of painting, as we have specimens of minerals or butterflies—and in the best and rarest case of all, because we have really, as we call it, taken a fancy to the picture; meaning the same sort of fancy which one would take to a pretty arm-chair or a newly shaped decanter. But as for real love of the picture, and joy of it when we have got it, I do not believe it is felt by one in a thousand.

I am afraid this apathy of ours will not be easily conquered ; but even supposing it should, and that we should begin to enjoy pictures properly, and that the supply of good ones increased as in that case it *would* increase—then comes another question. Perhaps some of my hearers this evening may occasionally have heard it stated of me that I am rather apt to contradict myself. I hope I am exceedingly apt to do so. I never met with a question yet, of any importance, which did not need, for the right solution of it, at least one positive and one negative answer, like an equation of the second degree. Mostly, matters of any consequence are three-sided, or four-sided, or polygonal ; and the trotting round a polygon is severe work for people any way stiff in their opinions. For myself, I am never satisfied that I have handled a subject properly till I have contradicted myself at least three times : but once must do for this evening. I have just said that there is no chance of our getting good Art unless we delight in it : next I say, and just as positively, that there is no chance of our getting good Art unless we resist our delight in it. We must love it first, and restrain our love for it afterwards.

This sounds strange ; and yet I assure you it is true. In fact, whenever anything does not sound strange, you may generally doubt its being true ; for all truth is wonderful. But take an instance in physical matters, of the same kind of contradiction. Suppose you were explaining to a young student in astronomy how the earth was kept steady in its orbit ; you would have to state to him—would you not?—that the earth always had a tendency to fall to the sun ; and that also it always had a tendency to fly away from the sun. These are two precisely contrary statements for him to digest at his leisure, before he can understand how

the earth moves. Now, in like manner, when Art is set in its true and serviceable course, it moves under the luminous attraction of pleasure on the one side, and with a stout moral purpose of going about some useful business on the other. If the artist works without delight, he passes away into space, and perishes of cold : if he works only for delight, he falls into the sun, and extinguishes himself in ashes. On the whole, this last is the fate, I do not say the most to be feared, but which Art has generally hitherto suffered, and which the great nations of the earth have suffered with it.

For, while most distinctly you may perceive in past history that Art has never been produced, except by nations who took pleasure in it, just as assuredly, and even more plainly, you may perceive that Art has always destroyed the power and life of those who pursued it for pleasure only. Surely this fact must have struck you as you glanced at the career of the great nations of the earth : surely it must have occurred to you as a point for serious questioning, how far, even in our days, we were wise in promoting the advancement of pleasures which appeared as yet only to have corrupted the souls and numbed the strength of those who attained to them. I have been complaining of England that she despises the Arts ; but I might, with still more appearance of justice, complain that she does not rather dread them than despise. For, what has been the source of the ruin of nations since the world began ? Has it been plague, or famine, earthquake-shock or volcano-flame ? None of these ever prevailed against a great people, so as to make their name pass from the earth. In every period and place of national decline, you will find other causes than these at work to bring it about, namely, luxury, effeminacy,

love of pleasure, fineness in Art, ingenuity in enjoyment. What is the main lesson which, as far as we seek any in our classical reading, we gather for our youth from ancient history? Surely this—that simplicity of life, of language, and of manners gives strength to a nation; and that luxuriousness of life, subtlety of language, and smoothness of manners bring weakness and destruction on a nation. While men possess little and desire less, they remain brave and noble: while they are scornful of all the arts of luxury, and are in the sight of other nations as barbarians, their swords are irresistible and their sway illimitable: but let them become sensitive to the refinements of taste, and quick in the capacities of pleasure, and that instant the fingers that had grasped the iron rod, fall from the golden sceptre. You cannot charge me with any exaggeration in this matter; it is impossible to state the truth too strongly, or as too universal. For ever you will see the rude and simple nation at once more virtuous and more victorious than one practised in the arts. Watch how the Lydian is overthrown by the Persian; the Persian by the Athenian; the Athenian by the Spartan; then the whole of polished Greece by the rougher Roman; the Roman, in his turn refined, only to be crushed by the Goth: and at the turning point of the middle ages, the liberty of Europe first asserted, the virtues of Christianity best practised, and its doctrines best attested, by a handful of mountain shepherds, without art, without literature, almost without a language, yet remaining unconquered in the midst of the Teutonic chivalry, and uncorrupted amidst the hierarchies of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I ought perhaps to remind the reader that this statement refers to two different societies among the Alps; the Waldenses in the 13th, and the people of the Forest Cantons in the 14th and following centuries. Protestants are



I was strangely struck by this great fact during the course of a journey last summer among the northern vales of Switzerland. My mind had been turned to the subject of the ultimate effects of Art on national mind before I left England, and I went straight to the chief fields of Swiss history: first to the centre of her feudal power, Hapsburg, the hawk's nest from which the Swiss Rodolph rose to found the Austrian empire; and then to the heart of her republicanism, that little glen of Morgarten, where first in the history of Europe the shepherd's staff prevailed over the soldier's spear. And it was somewhat depressing to me to find, as day by day I found more certainly, that this people which first asserted the liberties of Europe, and first conceived the idea of equitable laws, was in all the—shall I call them the slighter, or the higher?—sensibilities of the human mind, utterly deficient; and not only had remained from its earliest ages till now, without poetry, without Art, and without music, except a mere modulated cry; but, as far as I could judge from the rude efforts of their early monuments, would have been, at the time of their greatest national probity and power, incapable of producing good poetry or Art under any circumstances of education.

I say, this was a sad thing for me to find. And then, to mend the matter, I went straight over into Italy, and came at once upon a curious instance of the patronage of Art, of the character that usually inclines most to such patronage, and of the consequences thereof.

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perhaps apt sometimes to forget that the virtues of these mountaineers were shown in connection with vital forms of opposing religions; and that the patriots of Schwytz and Uri were as zealous Roman Catholics as they were good soldiers. We have to lay to their charge the death of Zuinglius as well as of Gessler.

From Morgarten and Grutli, I intended to have crossed to the Vaudois Valleys, to examine the shepherd character there; but on the way I had to pass through Turin, where unexpectedly I found the Paul Veroneses, one of which, as I told you just now, stayed me at once for six weeks. Naturally enough, one asked how these beautiful Veroneses came there: and found they had been commissioned by Cardinal Maurice of Savoy. Worthy Cardinal, I thought: that's what Cardinals were made for. However, going a little farther in the gallery, one comes upon four very graceful pictures by Albani—these also commissioned by the Cardinal, and commissioned with special directions, according to the Cardinal's fancy. Four pictures, to be illustrative of the four elements.

One of the most curious things in the mind of the people of that century is their delight in these four elements, and in the four seasons. They had hardly any other idea of decorating a room, or of choosing a subject for a picture, than by some renewed reference to fire and water, or summer and winter; nor were ever tired of hearing that summer came after spring, and that air was not earth, until these interesting pieces of information got finally and poetically expressed in that well-known piece of elegant English conversation about the weather, Thomson's "Seasons." So the Cardinal, not appearing to have any better idea than the popular one, orders the four elements; but thinking that the elements pure would be slightly dull, he orders them, in one way or another, to be mixed up with Cupids; to have, in his own words, "una copiosa quantita di Amorini." Albani supplied the Cardinal accordingly with Cupids in clusters: they hang in the sky like bunches of cherries; and leap out of the sea like flying fish; grow



out of the earth in fairy rings ; and explode out of the fire like squibs. No work whatsoever is done in any of the four elements, but by the Cardinal's Cupids. They are ploughing the earth with their arrows ; fishing in the sea with their bowstrings ; driving the clouds with their breath ; and fanning the fire with their wings. A few beautiful nymphs are assisting them here and there in pearl-fishing, flower-gathering, and other such branches of graceful industry ; the moral of the whole being, that the sea was made for its pearls, the earth for its flowers, and all the world for pleasure.

Well, the Cardinal, this great encourager of the arts, having these industrial and social theories, carried them out in practice, as you may perhaps remember, by obtaining a dispensation from the Pope to marry his own niece, and building a villa for her on one of the slopes of the pretty hills which rise to the east of the city. The villa which he built is now one of the principal objects of interest to the traveller as an example of Italian domestic architecture: to me, during my stay in the city, it was much more than an object of interest ; for its deserted gardens were by much the pleasantest place I could find for walking or thinking in, in the hot summer afternoons.

I say thinking, for these gardens often gave me a good deal to think about. They are, as I told you, on the slope of the hill above the city, to the east ; commanding, therefore, the view over it and beyond it, westward—a view which, perhaps, of all those that can be obtained north of the Apennines, gives the most comprehensive idea of the nature of Italy, considered as one great country. If you glance at the map, you will observe that Turin is placed in the centre of the crescent which the Alps form round the basin of Piedmont ; it is within ten miles of the foot of the

mountains at the nearest point; and from that point the chain extends half round the city in one unbroken Moorish crescent, forming three-fourths of a circle from the Col de Tende to the St. Gothard; that is to say, just two hundred miles of Alps, as the bird flies. I don't speak rhetorically or carelessly; I speak as I ought to speak here—with mathematical precision. Take the scale on your map; measure fifty miles of it accurately; try that measure from the Col de Tende to the St. Gothard, and you will find that four chords of fifty miles will not quite reach to the two extremities of the curve.

You see, then, from this spot, the plain of Piedmont, on the north and south, literally as far as the eye can reach; so that the plain terminates as the sea does, with a level blue line, only tufted with woods instead of waves, and crowded with towers of cities instead of ships. Then, in the luminous air beyond and behind this blue horizon-line, stand, as it were, the shadows of mountains, they themselves dark, for the southern slopes of the Alps of the Lago Maggiore and Bellinzona are all without snow; but the light of the unseen snowfields, lying level behind the visible peaks, is sent up with strange reflection upon the clouds; an everlasting light of calm Aurora in the north. Then, higher and higher around the approaching darkness of the plain, rise the central chains, not as on the Switzer's side, a recognizable group and following of successive and separate hills, but a wilderness of jagged peaks, cast in passionate and fierce profusion along the circumference of heaven; precipice behind precipice, and gulf beyond gulf, filled with the flaming of the sunset, and forming mighty channels for the flowings of the clouds, which roll up against them out of the vast Italian plain, forced together by

the narrowing crescent, and breaking up at last against the Alpine wall in towers of spectral spray ; or sweeping up its ravines with long moans of complaining thunder. Out from between the cloudy pillars, as they pass, emerge for ever the great battlements of the memorable and perpetual hills : Viso, with her shepherd-witnesses to ancient faith ; Rocca-Melone, the highest place of Alpine pilgrimage ;<sup>1</sup> Iseran, who shed her burial sheets of snow about the march of Hannibal ; Cenis, who shone with her glacier light on the descent of Charlemagne ; Paradiso, who watched with her opposite crest the stoop of the French eagle to Marengo ; and underneath all these, lying in her soft languor, this tender Italy, lapped in dews of sleep, or more than sleep—one knows not if it is trance, from which morning shall yet roll the blinding mists away, or if the fair shadows of her quietude are indeed the shades of purple death. And, lifted a little above this solemn plain, and looking beyond it to its snowy ramparts, vainly guardian, stands this palace dedicate to pleasure, the whole legend of Italy's past history written before it by the finger of God, written as with an iron pen upon the rock for ever, on all those fronting walls

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<sup>1</sup> The summit of Rocca-Melone is the sharp peak seen from Turin on the right hand of the gorge of the Cenis, dominant over the low projecting pyramid of the hill called by De Saussure *Montagne de Musinet*. Rocca-Melone rises to a height of 11,000 feet above the sea, and its peak is a place of pilgrimage to this day, though it seems temporarily to have ceased to be so in the time of De Saussure, who thus speaks of it :

“ Il y a eu pendant long-tems sur cette cime, une petite chapelle avec une image de Notre Dame qui étoit en grande vénération dans le pays, et où un grand nombre de gens alloient au mois d'août en procession, de Suze et des environs ; mais le sentier qui conduit à cette chapelle est si étroit et si scabreux qu'il n'y avoit presque pas d'années qu'il n'y pérît du monde ; la fatigue et la rareté de l'air saisissoient ceux qui avoient plutôt consulté leur dévotion que leurs forces ; ils tombèrent en défaillance, et de là dans le précipice.”

of reproachful Alp ; blazoned in gold of lightning upon the clouds that still open and close their unsealed scrolls in heaven ; painted in purple and scarlet upon the mighty missal pages of sunset after sunset, spread vainly before a nation's eyes for a nation's prayer. So stands this palace of pleasure ; desolate as it deserves—desolate in smooth corridor and glittering chamber—desolate in pleached walk and planted bower—desolate in that worst and bitterest abandonment which leaves no light of memory. No ruins are here of walls rent by war, and falling above their defenders into mounds of graves : no remnants are here of chapel-altar, or temple-porch, left shattered or silent by the power of some purer worship : no vestiges are here of sacred hearth and sweet homestead, left lonely through vicissitudes of fate, and heaven-sent sorrow. Nothing is here but the vain apparellings of pride sunk into dishonour, and vain appanages of delight now no more delightsome. The hill-waters, that once flowed and plashed in the garden fountains, now trickle sadly through the weeds that encumber their basins, with a sound as of tears : the creeping, insidious, neglected flowers weave their burning nets about the white marble of the balustrades, and rend them slowly, block from block, and stone from stone : the thin, sweet-scented leaves tremble along the old masonry joints as if with palsy at every breeze ; and the dark lichens, golden and grey, make the foot-fall silent in the path's centre.

And day by day as I walked there, the same sentence seemed whispered by every shaking leaf, and every dying echo, of garden and chamber.

“Thus end all the arts of life, only in death ; and thus issue all the gifts of man, only in his dishonour, when they are pursued or possessed in the service of pleasure only.”

This then is the great enigma of Art History,—you must not follow Art without pleasure, nor must you follow it for the sake of pleasure. And the solution of that enigma is simply this fact ; that wherever Art has been followed *only* for the sake of luxury or delight, it has contributed, and largely contributed, to bring about the destruction of the nation practising it : but wherever Art has been used *also* to teach any truth, or supposed truth—religious, moral, or natural—there it has elevated the nation practising it, and itself with the nation.

Thus the Art of Greece rose, and did service to the people, so long as it was to them the earnest interpreter of a religion they believed in : the Arts of northern sculpture and architecture rose, as interpreters of Christian legend and doctrine : the Art of painting in Italy, not only as religious, but also mainly as expressive of truths of moral philosophy, and powerful in pure human portraiture. The only great painters in our schools of painting in England have either been of portrait—Reynolds and Gainsborough ; of the philosophy of social life—Hogarth ; or of the facts of nature in landscape—Wilson and Turner. In all these cases, if I had time, I could show you that the success of the painter depended on his desire to convey a truth, rather than to produce a merely beautiful picture ; that is to say, to get a likeness of a man, or of a place ; to get some moral principle rightly stated, or some historical character rightly described, rather than merely to give pleasure to the eyes. Compare the feeling with which a Moorish architect decorated an arch of the Alhambra, with that of Hogarth painting the “*Marriage à la Mode*,” or of Wilkie painting the “*Chelsea Pensioners*,” and you will at once feel the difference between Art pursued for pleasure only, and for the sake of some useful principle or impression.

But what you might not so easily discern is, that even when painting does appear to have been pursued for pleasure only, if ever you find it rise to any noble level, you will also find that a stern search after truth has been at the root of its nobleness. You may fancy, perhaps, that Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret were painters for the sake of pleasure only: but in reality they were the only painters who ever sought entirely to master, and who did entirely master, the truths of light and shade as associated with colour, in the noblest of all physical created things, the human form. They were the only men who ever painted the human body; all other painters of the great schools are mere anatomical draughtsmen compared to them; rather makers of maps of the body, than painters of it. The Venetians alone, by a toil almost superhuman, succeeded at last in obtaining a power almost superhuman; and were able finally to paint the highest visible work of God with unexaggerated structure, undegraded colour, and unaffected gesture. It seems little to say this; but I assure you it is much to have *done* this—so much, that no other men but the Venetians ever did it: none of them ever painted the human body without in some degree caricaturing the anatomy, forcing the action, or degrading the hue.

Now, therefore, the sum of all is, that you who wish to encourage Art in England have to do two things with it: you must delight in it, in the first place; and you must get it to serve some serious work, in the second place. I don't mean by serious, necessarily moral: all that I mean by serious is in some way or other useful, not merely selfish, careless, or indolent. I had, indeed, intended before closing my address, to have traced out a few of the directions in which, as it seems to me, Art may be seriously



and practically serviceable to us in the career of civilization. I had hoped to show you how many of the great phenomena of nature still remained unrecorded by it, for *us* to record; how many of the historical monuments of Europe were perishing without memorial, for the want of but a little honest, simple, laborious, loving draughtsmanship; how many of the most impressive historical events of the day failed of teaching us half of what they were meant to teach, for want of painters to represent them faithfully, instead of fancifully, and with historical truth for their aim, instead of national self-glorification. I had hoped to show you how many of the best impulses of the heart were lost in frivolity or sensuality, for want of purer beauty to contemplate, and of noble thoughts to associate with the fervour of hallowed human passion; how, finally, a great part of the vital power of our religious faith was lost in us, for want of such art as would realize in some rational, probable, believable way, those events of sacred history which, as they visibly and intelligibly occurred, may also be visibly and intelligibly represented. But all this I dare not do yet. I felt, as I thought over these things, that the time was not yet come for their declaration: the time will come for it, and I believe soon; but as yet, the man would only lay himself open to the charge of vanity, of imagination, and of idle fondness of hope, who should venture to trace in words the course of the higher blessings which the Arts may have yet in store for mankind. As yet there is no need to do so: all that we have to plead for is an earnest and straightforward exertion in those courses of study which are opened to us day by day, believing only that they are to be followed gravely and for grave purposes, as by men, and not by children. I appeal,

finally, to all those who are to become the pupils of these schools, to keep clear of the notion of following Art as dilettantism : it ought to delight you, as your reading delights you—but you never think of your reading as dilettantism. It ought to delight you as your studies of physical science delight you—but you don't call physical science dilettantism. If you are determined only to think of Art as a play or a pleasure, give it up at once : you will do no good to yourselves, and you will degrade the pursuit in the sight of others. Better, infinitely better, that you should never enter a picture gallery, than that you should enter only to saunter and to smile : better, infinitely better, that you should never handle a pencil at all, than handle it only for the sake of complacency in your small dexterity : better, infinitely better, that you should be wholly uninterested in pictures, and uninformed respecting them, than that you should just know enough to detect blemishes in great works,—to give a colour of reasonableness to presumption, and an appearance of acuteness to misunderstanding. Above all, I would plead for this so far as the teaching of these schools may be addressed to the junior Members of the University. Men employed in any kind of manual labour, by which they must live, are not likely to take up the notion that they can learn any other art for amusement only ; but amateurs are : and it is of the highest importance, nay, it is just the one thing of all importance, to show them what drawing really means ; and not so much to teach them to produce a good work themselves, as to know it when they see it done by others. Good work, in the stern sense of the word, as I before said, no mere amateur can do ; and good work, in any sense, that is to say, profitable work for himself or for any one else, he can only do by being made in the beginning to



see what is possible for him, and what not ;—what is accessible, and what not ; and by having the majesty and sternness of the everlasting laws of fact set before him in their infinitude. It is no matter for appalling him : the man is great already who is made well capable of being appalled ; nor do we ever wisely hope, nor truly understand, till we are humiliated by our hope, and awe-struck by our understanding. Nay, I will go farther than this, and say boldly, that what you have mainly to teach the young men here is, not so much what they can do, as what they cannot ; —to make them see how much there is in nature which cannot be imitated, and how much in man which cannot be emulated. He only can be truly said to be educated in Art to whom all his work is only a feeble sign of glories which he cannot convey, and a feeble means of measuring, with ever-enlarging admiration, the great and untraversable gulf which God has set between the great and the common intelligences of mankind : and all the triumphs of Art which man can commonly achieve are only truly crowned by pure delight in natural scenes themselves, and by the sacred and self-forgetful veneration which can be nobly abashed, and tremblingly exalted, in the presence of a human spirit greater than his own.













